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Senate approves legislation to protect Great Lakes from aquatic nuisance species

LANSING – Legislation to help battle aquatic nuisance species in the Great Lakes was approved by the Michigan Senate today, announced Sen. Patty Birkholz, sponsor of the bill.

“If we are going to protect the Great Lakes for future generations, it will take the cooperation of all the states and provinces that touch the lakes,” said Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township. “We must eradicate these foreign species from the Great Lakes ecosystem before they destroy it.”

Senate Bill 332 would authorize the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to enter into an agreement with other Great Lakes basin states to create the Great Lakes Aquatic Nuisance Coalition. The coalition will be charged with eliminating this damaging form of biological pollution in the Great Lakes.

There are currently 162 aquatic nuisance species in the Great Lakes, including the sea lamprey, zebra mussel, spiny water flea and Eurasian ruffe. On average, a new species is introduced every eight months.

Aquatic nuisance species are commonly introduced to the Great Lakes through ballast water discharge from ocean-going vessels. Although laws are in place to prevent ballast water dumping, certain exemptions in the Clean Water Act are still allowing this harmful practice to continue, allowing more and more biological pollution in the Great Lakes.

SB 332 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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